

LAKE HURON.

INTERVIEWS AND FIELD NOTES, 1894.

INVESTIGATIONS BY JOINT INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION

MR. DAN CORLETT, CHEBOYGAN, MICHIGAN.

INTERVIEWED BY

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AUGUST 23, 1894.

*occupation.
all fish decreasing
trout
herring
menominee
general decrease*

Gill netter exclusively.
The trout are decreasing and everything is decreasing, herring, trout, menominee, whitefish, and everything else. They are not here this summer at any rate. Last summer there was not as good fishing around Cheboygan as there was the summer before, but there was good fishing on the Lake Michigan side of the Straits. Just as good whitefishing there a year ago as there ever was I guess. The fish we caught up there a year ago were just as good size as a man could want, and what fish we could catch this summer were good big fish.

*g.
P.
mesh*

We fish 4 1-2 inch mesh gill nets, and

the pound nets, the largest is 3 1-2 in the crib.

In the gill nets we would not catch anything less than 1 1-2 lb. dressed. We caught nearly all whitefish this spring, but that was not many. We fish in the spring at Waubeshank Light House. That is right up the Straits here about 30 miles. It is on the south shore about 18 miles beyond Mackinaw City. There are not generally any whitefish here at any time of the year, but a fellow here this summer got a couple of tons along in June with a sail boat. There is not as good fishing in the north part of Lake Huron as there is in the north part of Lake Michigan. The gill net fishing 2 years ago was just as good here as anywhere, but last summer there were 2 boats fishing out of here and they did not make their expenses, but the summer before that one man

g. much of it

m.p.

Season
Loc.

w.p.
abundant

N. Lake Mich.
better than
N. E. Huron

g. fishing
at line

fished out of here with one boat and made about \$1,500.

g.
loc.
They fish all the way from 3 to 6 miles off shore from Bois Blanc Island in from 25 to 50 fathoms. Spectacle Reef is one of our principal fishing grounds. There is good trout fishing there in the summer, or was at least.

tags
boats.
In the past there were 4 tags fishing out of here one spring and 2 or 3 sail boats. That is 4 years ago,--2 of Connables and 2 of Booth's tags. There is a tag been fishing out around here from Detour this summer so I heard, but did not see it. The boats which fish out from here would not indicate how much fishing was going on in this region. Connable had a couple of tags at Mackinaw City this spring and set a few nets, and then the Agitator, one of Booth's rigs, was here. I guess the demand for

market
fish around there (Mackinaw) is just for the summer residents.

This spring we could not sell fresh fish at all until about the first of July. I think the hard times have affected it a good deal. Most of the fish around here are shipped to Chicago, but a few to Detroit.

*g.
clear*
During July and August there are very few fishing gill nets. Most everybody lays up their nets during those months. We start in as soon as the ice goes out, and then omit those two months, and then begin again the first of September. We get the best fall fishing in October for trout, and November for whitefish. In November we calculate to go to Hammond's Bay this fall for whitefish. There is generally good fishing up at Waubeshanks in the fall for whitefish. We get most of the whitefish in November, but we get more trout than we do

*trout
my.*
loc.

whitefish. Get more trout in October.

There is a bigger fishing in November for whitefish than at any other time of the year. You cannot drive a pound net on the spawning ground for whitefish as it is generally stony ground and you cannot get a pound net in.

P.
on spawning
ground, N.Y.

The mesh in the gill nets is 4 1-2 for summer fishing and 5 1-2 in the fall for both whitefish and trout. We catch larger fish in the fall. For menominee we use 3 inch mesh. We have regular places for using the menominee gill nets. Cannot catch any menominees where you catch whitefish and trout. Very seldom get a whitefish where we catch the menominee, but get a few trout. You hardly ever get a menominee in more than 80 or 90 feet of water, and generally soft muddy bottom, especially in the summer time. You can catch them most all

4,
mesh
(fish)

menominee
Loc.

m.f.
trout

menominee

summer, and spring and fall, and even in the winter. They seem to be all over wherever I have been in that depth of water. Of course in the fall they are in shallow water to spawn. They spawn later than the whitefish. About the first of December they start to spawn. The whitefish begin spawning about November 1, and sometimes a little later, and sometimes a little earlier. The bulk of their spawning is the fore part of November. The trout spawn in October. They do not spawn much in September. They come ashore then, but they are around shallow water quite a while before they spawn.

whitefish spawning

trout spawning

A good rig around here is about 100 nets. The nets are about 500 feet long. A tug generally fishes about 36 nets in a gang, and has 4 gangs, and their nets are all 800 feet long. Here they have to lift every 4 days generally. They fish 5 gangs here

g. quantity

time out

G.

in the spring early sometimes. In the spring we get a good many whitefish in our gill nets, but do not catch them in Lake Huron. We set out here this spring and made 3 lifts and only got one fish. We always set our nets on the bottom.

In the gill nets we take trout, whitefish and menominees. Get no wall-eyed pike to speak of. Got 3 or 4 last week in the menominee gill nets. Get a few shovel-nosed pike, and a few perch and herring mixed in. Do not get any black bass in the gill nets, nor catfishes, nor sturgeon. Do not get any rock or calico bass, or sheeps-head. We get the lawyers and suckers. Never saw, or heard of, a moon-eye.

We get quite a few long jaws sometimes with the menominees in the fall. Do not get the blue fin. The long-jaw you can hardly tell from a herring, only their under

• *W. J. J.*
sewer

Where set

G.
catch.
Trout
W. J. J.
menominee
halibut
Eel
fresh
herring

No bass
No cat
No sturgeon
No rock bass
No "cubies"
No sheepshead
ling
sucker
No moon-eye
Long jaw
No bluefin

jaw sticks out, but a regular black fin is a different fish altogether. A black fin is just about like a whitefish, only their fins are black. They are about the same size as the long-jaw. I never saw any that would weigh over 2 1-2 lbs. I do not think they would average much over 1 1-2 lb.

herring

The herring will average 1-4 lb. apiece. They will probably be about 8 inches long on an average.

*q.
time out*

With the small boats we leave the nets out about 3 nights. The fish will stay in good condition that length of time. May be once in a while a bad one, but as a rule they are all right.

*they
came down*

There was a fellow from Detour had tugs here a long time ago. It must be 12 or 15 years ago. They fished this place out once before you know; that was about 8 years ago; so that they could not catch anything. They

offal

did it with tugs. And they threw the offal in the lake and I think that hurt the fishing also. That is not a good practice, and I have an idea that is what is the matter with that place up at Waubeshanks. I do not think they threw any in there this summer to amount to anything, but they did a year ago, because you would get your nets full of it there after a gale of wind. Now they generally take the offal up to the dumping grounds.

*tugs
caused decrease
Remained after
a rest
about
m.f.*

They simply fished it out here and then let it alone for 3 or 4 years and it was about as good as ever. They fished out both trout and whitefish and the whitefish never came back, but the trout did. There was good fishing for whitefish before that. The trout live on herring and small fish. I think whitefish will pay out on these lakes before long anyway, there is so much

*trout
food.*

*m.f. will
pay out
caused it.*

dirt around.

● P.
9.
Cons. fish

We get harder fish in the pound nets because they are all alive when we take them, but would get a larger fish in the gill nets and can sell them for just as good a price. A fish that is too soft to sell fresh can be salted all right, and there are always more or less salt fish from gill net fish.

Fish decrease
cause

P.
Small mesh

I think the reason the fish are decreasing is because there are so many of them caught. I think fishing small mesh pound nets has more to do with the decrease than anything else. The most of them generally fish 2 1-2 inch mesh. They are allowed to fish a small mesh for herring and menominees. The regular size for herring is 2 1-2 and for whitefish 3 1-2. You cannot catch herring on the whitefish grounds when the whitefish are there. They set the fine

W. f. & herring
Association

mesh nets on the whitefish grounds. I saw 13 whitefish this spring that just weighed 1 lb. after they were dressed. It is all right to use 2 1-2 inch mesh if you use it in the proper place, and proper time, and you will not get any whitefish at all.

In the fall is the time for herring--in October and November. You can generally catch them on the same grounds the whitefish are on in the spring, but there will not be any whitefish there in the fall. I think they should not be allowed to put those small pound nets in at all in the spring. They do not want to put a herring net in over 30 feet. They catch whitefish in the spring in 12 feet sometimes. You might get a few herring through the spring and summer here, but it would not pay to fish for them then. Some have made a business of catching herring here, but it is a small business.

P.
mesh.
D.B.
herring
season

(herring
season)

Herring
disease

The herring left here all at once about 6 years ago. There was a time when one man up here about 6 miles put up 1,200 packages of herring one fall with one net, but you cannot do it now.

P.
G.
menominee

I never heard of any one catching menominees in the pound nets much. That is a gill-net fish, and about the only way you can catch them.

more P. than
G.

I guess there is more pound netting than gill netting around here, even taking the tugs into consideration.

Spearing
winter

There is not much spearing here in the winter. They take only trout and they are large ones.

offal
sawdust
logs

I do not think the offal should be thrown back into the water. Sawdust does not bother us any, but the logs do. They tear our nets all to pieces in a gale of wind. These old sunken logs travel on the bottom

when there is a gale of wind or a current.
The rafts do not bother us any. The bark
does some, but I do not suppose there is any
help for that. We get lots of bark in our
nets in the deep holes around here. If we
get a good dose of it we throw the nets
away. We are troubled a good deal by
clinkers around here. They are a hard
thing on the nets. The gill nets would not
suffer from the sawdust much but you take
these shingle mills along the shore and they
throw all their refuse wood into the water.
There is a good deal of that sinks, and it
tears the nets. I think there is a law
against their throwing it in the river, but
do not know how it is in the lake. There
are mills that throw their refuse into the
lakes. You take these mills around here
they generally dispose of their refuse, all
except this water mill up here (on the river),

Q bark

clinkers

sawdust
Q. P.

Shingle refuse

water mills

and they throw their sawdust and a good part of their refuse into the river. Some days you will see this river covered with it. They have a gang, but I do not know how it works. I know they put a good deal of their sawdust in that field there, but there is a good deal of it comes down the river also. I do not know whether the tannery is doing any harm or not. I know they must throw quite a lot of stuff in the river, because it has changed the color of the water since they have been here, but I do not know how it affects the fish. I think the wall-eyed pike, perch and shovel-nosed pickerel spawn around the river here. I do not think many sturgeon go in the river, and we do not have many sturgeon about here anyway.

I think there should be different regulations in regard to pound nets than there are now. I do not think they should be allowed to fish small mesh pound nets in the

2
Tannery

*walleye
P.
Eel
Sturgeon
in river*

3
*Regulation
P.*

*Small mesh
Season*

*P.
mesh
herring nets*

spring at all. The proper size mesh for the herring nets would be 2 1-2 inches, and they should be allowed to fish that only in the fall. I do not think they should be allowed to fish them on whitefish spawning grounds, but I do not know as it would make a great deal of difference as you cannot catch many small whitefish there anyway. The small ones do not seem to spawn.

*mesh -
fish*

In the ordinary pound nets the mesh should not be less than 3 1-4 or 3 1-2. A 4 inch mesh would let a pretty big whitefish through, and I would prefer 3 1-2 inch. A 4 inch mesh would let a No.1 whitefish through, weighing 1 1-4 lbs. dressed.

offal

I think there should be some kind of law to stop them throwing offal in the lake.

close season

During the spawning time of whitefish I suppose it would be a good thing to have a close season, but I do not see what differ-

once there is in the time of year you catch them. If you catch a whitefish in the spring you are destroying just as much spawn as though you caught him in the fall. I think it would probably be a good thing to have a close season, however. There is an awful lot of fish caught when they are spawning.

*throwing out small
w/ trout* I do not think there should be any No. 2 whitefish caught at all. I never saw very many small trout caught. I should not think they ought to catch any smaller trout than they do whitefish.

*Pounds
distance apart* If the pound nets were too close they would soon catch all the fish out and would not get any at all. I think if these lakes were let alone for a few years there would be piles of fish here.

*Period of rest
for 5 or 7
years.*
*not egg
collecting* There is no very good place for getting whitefish eggs about here. The best place

I know of is Detour. There were no fish planted here this summer at all. I do not think it would pay for a man to come around here in the fall for what whitefish eggs he could get. There might be some around Hammond's Bay, but I do not think it would pay. We are 108 miles from Alpena here. Hammond's Bay is about 20 miles from here, There is a big current in these Straits at times.

Current
4.
care
life
We put lime on our gill nets to keep them. We wash them with it once a month. It cuts the slime and everything off. Gill nets will last generally about 2 seasons.

Sturgeon
Canada.
There are places on the Canada shore, at Serpent River, where they take sturgeon. I saw 150 taken out of 5 pound nets about 5 years ago.

